

The Yale Study in Public Health Administration

More people enter public health because of chance and as a result of personal contacts with public health workers than for any other reasons. Other important motivating factors are work content and working conditions. Education and training are relatively less important. Formal vocational counseling plays a negligible role in recruitment for public health.

Most public health workers do not enter public health at the beginning of their careers; about one-third have had 10 or more years' experience in other fields before coming to public health. Such experience commonly has been in hospitals and related institutions or in business and industry. Physicians and nurses tend to have had hospital experience, whereas other personnel have worked in business or industry.

There is relatively little movement of public health workers from agency to agency, or even from job to job within the same agency.

The majority of public health workers are college graduates. More than one-quarter have graduate degrees; about one-third of these degrees are in public health. In collegiate and graduate education, emphasis has been on the natural sciences. Ten percent of the workers have had no formal education beyond high school.

The public health worker spends one-third of his time in direct service activities, one-third in administration and community relations and organization, and the remaining one-third of the time in routine, stereotyped activities.

Most public health workers are happy to be in public health. However, one-seventh of the workers are unhappy about public health work in general. The greatest single source of satisfaction for public health workers is not in their jobs but in their associates. Major sources of dissatisfaction are inadequate salaries, excessive clerical work, inadequate work facilities, lack of recognition and appreciation in the agency, lack of opportunity for advancement, lack of responsibility and freedom of action, and the absence of a "sense of belonging" in the agency.

These and many related findings were obtained in a study of public health administration, known as the Yale Public Health Personnel Research Project. The study was initiated in 1950 by a research team of the Department of Public Health at Yale University and was supported by research grants from the National Institutes of Health, Public Health Service, and the National Tuberculosis Association.

Perhaps as important as the findings of the study were the exploration and development of methods by which such studies could be conducted. The project showed some of the things that could be done in administrative research of this nature and, also, some of the things that

could not be done. It differed from past research in that its focus was the public health worker rather than the public health program. Its purpose was to study the backgrounds of public health workers, their activities, and their reactions to their jobs.

The study was motivated by the conviction that the information sought was essential to successful recruitment and efficient utilization of public health personnel. Both are of crucial importance in the face of existing shortages of qualified public health personnel.

The methods employed and some of the findings of this research are being published in a series of papers in *Public Health Reports*.